



# **Foot, Mouth and Skin Care**

## FOOT CARE

Amputation is twice as common in people with diabetes over the age of 65 than in younger people with diabetes. Diabetes can affect the feet in two ways: nerve damage and circulation problems. Poor vision and decreased sense of feeling in the feet (nerve damage), as well as difficulty getting around, are some of the reasons why problems with the feet/legs may not be noticed. Signs of nerve damage are: numbness or tingling, pain and burning, decreased sense of feeling, and muscle weakness. Decreased blood flow to the feet causes wounds or injuries to heal more slowly.

When taking care of a client with diabetes, it is important to remember that good foot care can prevent or detect problems.

### ***PRACTICE POINT***

*It is the responsibility of the visiting nurse to review correct foot care with the HHA. If you notice any changes in the feet, call the visiting nurse. The HHA should never cut toenails.*

## MOUTH CARE

People with diabetes are more at risk for tooth and gum problems and infections. Those with poor diabetes control have a higher chance of getting gum infections. It is important when taking care of the client with diabetes that you also offer good mouth care. You should make sure that your client brushes their teeth (or you brush the teeth for them) and, if possible, flosses. If the toothbrush is worn, it is suggested that a new one be obtained. Many people also will use mouthwash.

### ***PRACTICE POINT***

*If you notice any bleeding from the gums, or red and swollen gums, bad breath, pus, white or red patches, dark spots or loose teeth, or if the client complains of pain, notify the visiting nurse.*

## SKIN CARE

People with diabetes are more prone to skin problems, especially people with poorly controlled blood glucose. Bedbound or wheelchair clients may be more susceptible to reddened areas and bedsores. It is important when assisting your client with bathing that you observe the skin for reddened areas, open wounds, and dry skin.

### ***PRACTICE POINT***

*Keep the skin dry and clean. Use powder in areas where skin touches skin. Use moisturizing lotion to prevent the skin from becoming dry, but never between the toes unless directed by the visiting nurse. Use mild soaps. Notify the visiting nurse if you notice any reddened areas or wounds.*